

WTHR

Insurance regulator asks for cancellation break

Indianapolis - The Indiana Department of Insurance is asking insurance companies to give a break to policyholders who live in areas hit by recent storms and flooding.

State Insurance Commissioner Jim Atterholt is calling for a 60-day moratorium on policy cancellations for late payments. He's also asking for a waiver of penalties or late fees during the period. The commissioner made his request Tuesday, but the 60-day period can retroactively date back to storms that happened May 30.

Atterholt says his request isn't an order, but it does have support in the industry and he doesn't expect problems with compliance.

Some Martinsville flood victims find relief

Martinsville - The state and federal government have a deal for some flood victims.

People whose homes and belongings were damaged or destroyed by the flood that ravaged Martinsville won't have to rebuild and move back. That suits Randy Fark just fine.

"When you watch your stuff float off down the street, why would you ever want to come back?" asked Fark.

"I definitely would like to get out. The flood destroyed everything I have," said Mona Beck, resident.

Cindy Farrand is skeptical. "If they are wanting to give you a couple of thousand, no, it's not worth it. Or if they want to give you the total value before it was damaged."

State workers are going door to door. There are 28 homes in the way of the new Interstate 69 extension. Although construction is years away, Indiana is offering to buy them now.

"I would be extremely grateful and happy. For someone like me, it is an answer to my prayers," said Fark.

Diana Roy's home is mess. A buy-out would spare her the financial and emotional cost of rebuilding, but the devil is in the details.

Roy has questions about his new deal: "Will it be market value? Will they pay off mortgages? Will they give us what they think it is worth?"

Across the street from Roy and on connecting streets - homes are even more badly damaged. The state won't buy them, but Martinsville's mayor says FEMA will.

"We have another meeting with FEMA about flood buy-outs," said Mayor Phil Deckard.

The buy-outs are needed for more than 40 homes that are so badly damaged they may not be worth rebuilding. Those homes are in a severe flood plain and will receive federal disaster assistance. FEMA will require owners to raise their homes as much as four feet in order to escape future floods.

A government buy-out is a deal many home owners probably can't afford to refuse. Now homeless for a week and a half, many home owners are weary from work and turmoil, eager for a chance to reclaim their lives.

"I will take the offer to get out. I don't want to rebuild in this hole down here any more," said Fark.

Purdue experts warn public about flood-damaged produce

West Lafayette - The floods in central and southern Indiana are gone, but the impact is still far-reaching - perhaps even into homes and kitchens across the state.

Purdue agriculture experts issue a warning to avoid buying fruits and vegetables from flooded Indiana farm fields. That produce could be contaminated by microorganisms because of rivers that flooded parts of Indiana this month.

"If there's flooded conditions, there's a risk there, and we'd advise you not to eat that produce," said Steve Mayer of Purdue Cooperative Extension Service.

Often sold at farmers markets during the summer, Indiana's fruit and vegetable crops were valued at more than \$112 million in 2006. It is unclear how many production acres were flooded this month.

Warnings of possible crop contaminations come as a surprise for some consumers who are unaware of the potential health hazards.

"I was aware of the flooding, but [food contamination] is nothing I thought about, and now I've got a sack full of tomatoes I'm not sure about," said Andre Gregg of Indianapolis.

Health officials say that even cleaning and sanitizing produce won't kill disease-causing organisms.

Ross Faris sells vegetables and fruits at Indiana farmers markets and sees little room for concern.

"I don't know of anyone with an operation close to a river or stream that could have contaminated soil," said Faris.

Even farmers who planted high-value crops like fruits and vegetables far from streams and rivers weren't immune from overflow that in some cases stretched for miles.

Agriculture experts say that crops contaminated by flooding should be thrown away or tilled into the soil, but not sold.

"The best thing to do is to ask, but I'd be surprised that they would even be available on the market," said grower Karen Nading.

Efforts to insure that contaminated crops don't end up on the dinner table could result in multi-million dollar losses to growers.

WISHTV

Crews ready to repair flood-damaged roadways

Besides damage to homes, the recent flooding has caused widespread problems with roads and bridges in central and southern Indiana.

Maintenance crews have begun repairing roads in most places, but state officials say it won't be a quick fix and will likely carry a huge price tag.

At least 10 state roads are still under water following the widespread flooding. Dozens of other roads have been damaged, and gravel county roads have also suffered damage from erosion.

Transportation department officials say it will likely take at least another week to get a complete picture of the damage. Federal money will cover most repairs, but counties that don't qualify for complete federal assistance may have to pay as much as 25% of the costs themselves.

State survey teams are trying to finish the assessments in the three districts most affected by the floods - the southeast, southwest and west-central transportation districts.

INDOT wants to buy flooded homes in Martinsville

MARTINSVILLE, Ind. (WISH) - The state of Indiana has a deal for some Martinsville flood victims, get back on your feet by selling us your home.

INDOT announced they'll buy homes on Southview Drive in the centerfield addition of Martinsville at their pre-flood value, if the owners are willing to sell.

Neighbors Helen Schoolcraft and Alesia Payne are still comforting each other after the devastating floods that ruined their homes.

"We had so much damage that we just didn't want to come back here," said Payne.

"The state is in no way, shape or form coming in to try to get a bargain basement price. These will be fair market appraisals. There's a process in place to take a look at what the home would cost," said INDOT spokesman Andy Dietrick.

INDOT is trying to get an early jump on the I-69 expansion. It's looking at buying about 28 homes right now, but they say that could change in the future.

"I do know that we've got a meeting tomorrow afternoon with homeland security about the buy out for the rest of the folks," said Ross Holloway a Martinsville City Engineer.

The sales, which the state would've offered eventually, will pave the way for the much touted I-69 expansion project. Schoolcraft and Payne are ready to sell their flood damaged homes.

"I think its safety for everybody. Don't you? I think its safety for everybody. The answer to our prayers," said Schoolcraft.

But Virginia Murphy whose home sustained more than \$50,000 in damage says she and her husband can't afford another home like theirs.

"We don't want to go anywhere. We don't want anything else to happen. We're ready to rebuild and start our lives again," said Murphy.

FEMA is requiring any rebuilt homes in that area to be two to four feet off the ground. Martinsville city officials will meet with FEMA at 2 p.m. on Thursday.

[Congressional delegates unite to push for more flood aid](#)

WASHINGTON (WISH) - All nine of Indiana's Congressional delegation are standing together, asking for additional disaster funding.

Forty-seven of the 92 counties in Indiana are in some level of disaster or emergency.

Currently, there is \$5.5 billion in disaster relief funds for the U.S. But that may not be enough to carry the country through hurricane season.

Indiana Congressman Steve Buyer spent more than a week with Indiana flood victims prompting a letter asking for another \$2 billion.

"The Midwest has always been there for other regions of the country. Now we have the Midwest facing the largest disaster since Hurricane Katrina and now the rest of the country needs to step up and help the Midwest," said Buyer.

The bipartisan effort wants local governments to only pay 10 percent and flood victims to be able to withdraw retirement account money with no penalty.

Action on the emergency request may come this week.

[Sink hole problem in New Castle making roads dangerous](#)

NEW CASTLE, Ind. (WISH) - Floodwaters have receded in New Castle, but problems remain.

24-Hour News 8 first reported about that city's sink hole issues last week. And now, new sink holes are forming every day making roads even more dangerous.

"It's dangerous to drive around town you have to watch," said Donald Thompson.

Thompson has lived in New Castle his entire life. He says floodwaters brought an unexpected neighbor, a sink hole, who moved in just a few feet away from his home.

So far, more than two dozen sink holes have been found in New Castle.

"It's the ones that we haven't seen that concern us," said New Castle Mayor Jim Small. "You basically have the asphalt suspended in air. So someone standing at the edge could fall in, especially a child."

Repairs are underway, but it's a tedious process. Workers have to remove the weakened section of road and fill in huge holes. The mayor says repairs will cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. Money New Castle doesn't have. But Henry County is under a disaster declaration, so FEMA may help out. Few cities plan for as many sink holes turning up in New Castle.

"For them all to happen all of a sudden it was scary," said Mayor Small.

Street crews believe more sink holes will appear in the coming weeks, which would make the roads even more dangerous. Add to that a barricade shortage and residents are left with a sinking feeling.

"We're concerned to make sure it gets fixed before some bad accident does happen," said Thompson.

In an effort to prevent future sink holes, the city just bought a robotic camera designed to travel through underground water pipes.

The mayor says the camera should detect problems that cause sink holes.

[Replacing voting machines in Johnson Co. expected to be costly](#)

JOHNSON COUNTY, Ind. (WISH) - Johnson County is finally getting a better look at voting machines ruined by flooding last week.

Floodwaters damaged nearly 500 voting machines in a Johnson County annex building.

"They were in approximately six feet of water," said Johnson County Clerk Jill Jackson.

They have since been moved to higher ground. The prognosis from the voting machine company is not expected to be good.

"Until the county gets something in writing from them, what I expect the letter to say is that our warranty is going to be null and void they can't warrant equipment that's been submerged in water," said Jackson.

However, there is some good news. Some of the printers for the machines work, so do some of the programmable ballot cards. But the machines aren't so good.

In order to have an election there is a very tight timetable. The clerk needs to have all these replaced by the end of August.

Federal disaster money may be available to replace voting equipment, but time is money. So Jackson will try to get machines that other clerks around the country may be getting rid of.

"When you start changing voting equipment and changing your training and doing things differently than you did it the last time, it tends to keep poll workers from volunteering to work and we certainly don't want voters to be afraid to come to the polls on Election Day because they're afraid to use new equipment," said Jackson.

Jackson is also concerned there may be a shortage of working voting machines because of other natural disasters like the widespread flooding in Iowa.

White House seeks \$1.8 billion for Midwest flood aid

WASHINGTON (AP) - The White House is asking Congress for \$1.8 billion in emergency disaster aid for the flood-ravaged Midwest.

Congressional aides say lawmakers on Capitol Hill are likely to add money to the president's request, which has been sent informally to Capitol Hill. The administration wants to give most of the money to the government's main disaster relief fund, with additional help going to farmers and small businesses.

A dozen senators in both parties are pressing to add money for levee repair and help for displaced homeowners, among other pressing needs.

The flood aid is to be added to a long-stalled Iraq funding bill with hopes for a House vote tomorrow.

Other Emergency Information

Disaster Declarations:

- President George W. Bush has approved 30 counties for federal assistance in Adams, Bartholomew, Brown, Clay, Daviess, Dearborn, Decatur, Gibson, Greene, Hamilton, Hancock, Henry, Jackson, Jennings, Johnson, Knox, Marion, Monroe, Morgan, Owen, Parke, Posey, Putnam, Randolph, Rush, Shelby, Sullivan, Vermillion, Vigo and Wayne counties.
- Applications for FEMA assistance are made by telephone or computer and can be done as soon as a county is declared for individual assistance. It is not necessary for a storm victim to visit an office to complete an application. The applications may be found at <http://www.fema.gov/> or the state's emergency assistance Web site at www.emergency.in.gov. The toll free number is 1-800-621-FEMA (3362) or 1-800-462-7585 (TTY) for the hearing and speech impaired.

Insurance:

- The Indiana Department of Insurance called on all insurance companies doing business in the state to implement a 60-day moratorium on the cancellation of any insurance policy because of late payment by policyholders who live in counties impacted by the recent severe weather. The moratorium begins today but is retroactive to cover the storms that began May 30.
- The department's Bulletin 163 may be found at this link: www.in.gov/idoi/2414.htm

US Housing and Urban Development:

- The federal agency has announced it will provide expedited support to homeowners and low-income renters who have been forced from their homes. This includes foreclosure relief for those whose homes are insured through HUD's Federal Housing Administration. Here is a link to HUD's announcement: www.hud.gov/news/release.cfm?content=pr08-083.cfm

Agriculture:

- Several types of agricultural relief are now available to Hoosier storm victims through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). They include: low-interest loans from the USDA Farm Service Agency; extension of the 2008 final crop reporting certification deadline to August 15; enrollment for assistance through USDA's Emergency Conservation program, which provides funding and technical assistance to rehabilitate farmland, and application for USDA's Emergency Watershed Protection program, which includes such assistance as debris removal from streams and stabilization of stream banks.
- Full information is available at the Indiana Department of Agriculture Web page at: http://www.in.gov/portal/news_events/23850.htm
- The USDA also issued a report that said nine percent of corn, nine percent of soybeans, and five percent of winter wheat crops have been flooded. The numbers come from questions that were included this week in the USDA's weekly crop progress survey in Indiana. The report can be found at: <http://news.uns.purdue.edu/>

WRTV

State Steps Up I-69 Home Offers In Wake Of Flooding

MARTINSVILLE, Ind. -- The state highway department plans on making offers to buy about two-dozen homes that were hit by this month's flooding and will be in the path of the planned Interstate 69 extension.

An [Indiana](#) Department of Transportation real estate team will contact some 25 Martinsville homeowners by the end of this week about selling their property, agency spokesman Andy Dietrick said. Under normal circumstances, the offers wouldn't be made for several years.

"At a time like this, when people are looking to put their lives back together, having options can be a nice thing," Dietrick said.

The schedule for construction on the I-69 segment through Martinsville, about 25 miles southwest of [Indianapolis](#) hasn't been set, Dietrick said.

Officials estimate that the June 14 flooding damaged about 1,700 homes in Martinsville, including at least 160 that are being considered destroyed.

Tammy Pellum, a real estate agent who has been marketing a home along Indiana 37 in the Martinsville area for two years, said the state's offers would help the entire community.

"It would improve the town," Pellum said. "It would help get us back to where this is a desirable place to live."

The 142-mile I-69 extension is to run between Evansville and Indianapolis. The first section to be built is a 13-mile stretch from Evansville to Oakland City in southwestern Indiana.

In March, INDOT crews began clearing land for a nearly 2-mile-long stretch in Gibson County.

Louisville TV

WAVE

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WDRB

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Transportation department officials say it will likely take at least another week to get a complete picture of the damage. Federal money will cover most repairs, but counties that don't qualify for complete federal assistance may have to pay as much as 25% of the costs themselves.

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WHAS

[Warning to watch what you eat after Midwest flooding](#)

(WHAS11) - A warning has been issued to watch what you eat after the massive flooding in the Midwest.

In Indiana, Purdue specialists say to be careful when buying food from farmers markets.

Fruit and vegetables that have been in contact with floodwaters should not be sold or eaten as fresh produce.

[Crews ready to repair flood-damaged roadways](#)

Floodwaters that swallowed hundreds of homes across a swath of central and southern Indiana also caused havoc beneath the surface, cutting gullies in roads and washing dozens of bridges clean from their supports.

Maintenance crews have begun repairing roads in most places they were damaged, but state officials caution it won't be a quick fix and will likely carry a hefty price tag.

"We not only want the roads passable, we want them safe," said Marvin Jenkins, spokesman for the Indiana Department of Transportation's southwestern district in Seymour.

At least 10 state roads remained under water Wednesday after heavy rain the first weekend of June triggered widespread flooding. Dozens more were scoured by floodwaters and left scarred and pocked. Gravel county roads also suffered damage as the floodwaters eroded their surfaces.

INDOT officials estimate it will take at least another week before a complete picture of the damage to roads statewide emerges, but attention already has turned to finding money for the repairs.

Federal dollars will cover most repairs under programs offered through the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Federal Highway Administration. But roads that don't qualify for complete federal assistance may require cash-strapped counties to pay as much as 25 percent.

In Daviess County, where the White River swelled far beyond its banks and at least \$3 million in damage has been recorded, county Commissioner Anthony Wichman fears the worst.

The waters damaged nearly every road in a 27-square-mile area, pushing the county's financial responsibility close to \$750,000. Officials are willing, if needed, to leave roads unfixed if the cost of repairs look likely to strain county finances.

"They may just stay as unimproved roads for awhile until we can get to that point of repairing them," Wichman said.

State survey teams are working to complete assessments in the three districts most affected by the floods — the southeast, southwest and west-central transportation districts.

Already officials are warning that some of the more heavily damaged roads could take months to repair.

State Road 37 north of Martinsville and State Road 46 in Owen County — each of which had considerable damage — may not be repaired until the end of August, Jenkins said. Other sections of road are not slated to open until September.

"Everything is obviously weather dependent," Jenkins said. "If we get hit again, we may have a whole new set of issues."

The floodwaters damaged both blacktop highways and county gravel roads, where the water cut gullies with ease. The deluge also overwhelmed drainage systems, and caused mounds of earth to spill over roads where hillsides gave way, transportation officials said.

In the state's west-central district, which includes Terre Haute, as many as 16 roads were closed at one point but that had dwindled to four by Wednesday. In the southwestern district, which was the last to experience the floods as the crest moved down the Wabash River, the damage has yet to be fully realized.

"We're still trying to get roads open and we'll worry about calculating dollars when we have a little more time," said Cher Goodwin, the district's spokeswoman. "Our focus is to get the roadways open so the public can travel with as little inconvenience as possible."

WIBC

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Louisville Courier Journal

Repairs start on flood-damaged roads

Floodwaters that swallowed hundreds of homes in Central and Southern Indiana also caused havoc beneath the surface, cutting gullies in roads and washing dozens of bridges from their supports.

Maintenance crews have begun repairing roads, but state officials caution that the fix won't be a quick and will likely carry a hefty price tag.

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Gravel county roads also suffered erosion damage from floodwaters.

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[Caution on flooded produce urged](#)

Purdue **University** extension specialists are urging consumers to use caution when buying produce from farmers markets this summer due to the risk of possible contamination in flooded areas.

Fruits and vegetables that have been in contact with floodwaters should not be sold or eaten because they could be contaminated with microorganisms, said Elizabeth Maynard, an extension specialist in horticulture at Purdue's North Central campus in Westville.

Dave Clamme, an extension agent in Delaware County, agreed.

"If there is a possibility of contamination, you'd hope that the producer would be conscientious and do what's best for the group rather than act selfishly and do something to kill the farmers market because people can't trust it any more," he said.

Sprays, sanitizers and washing will not eliminate disease-causing organisms, so crops affected by flooding should be disposed of or worked into the soil, extension specialists said.

But crops that have been in standing rainwater rather than overflow from rivers or creeks should be safe to eat, Clamme said.

Farmers who grow fruit in flooded areas should not assume their crops are safe even if the fruit grows on trees, said Peter Hirst, an extension specialist in commercial tree fruit.

One farmer said, however, that those who grow vegetables and fruits are protective of the crops, which have a high commercial value.

The production value of Indiana's vegetable and fruit crops was more than \$112 million in 2006.

"If you're producing high-value crops like fruits and vegetables, you tend to put that crop in a location that's not flood prone," said grain farmer Joe Russell, an official with the Delaware County Farm Bureau.

While urging caution, Maynard saw no cause for consumers to shun fresh produce.

"I don't think people should stay away from farmers markets," she said.

"I think you should go, and if you have concerns, you should ask the producer," Maynard said.

Evansville Courier Press

[State offers to buy I-69 path homes in one flooded area now](#)

INDIANAPOLIS — Since the Interstate 69 extension from Evansville to Indianapolis already is scheduled to be built through a Morgan County area that flooded last week, the Indiana Department of Transportation will contact property owners there about buying up their homes early.

Martinsville, southwest of Indianapolis, was hit hard by the June 7 torrential rains and the severe flooding that followed. The damage was so extensive that Martinsville was one of the first three Indiana cities where state and federal officials opened disaster assistance centers on Friday.

Martinsville also is where construction of the sixth and final section of I-69 is planned about a decade from now. That section generally will piggyback the existing Indiana 37 corridor from Bloomington, Ind., to Indianapolis.

While visiting the new disaster assistance center last week, Gov. Mitch Daniels heard from some affected Martinsville residents who suggested the state acquire their flooded properties now, rather than years from now. Daniels relayed the idea to Indiana Department of Transportation Commissioner Karl Browning and instructed him to pursue it, department spokesman Andy Dietrick said.

At least 28 flooded homes on the south side of Indiana 37 are likely to be in the I-69 corridor, no matter how it is routed, Dietrick said. Since the state would need to acquire those properties anyway, the department this week will contact the homeowners about buying them now, before the homeowners clean and restore them.

Dietrick emphasized that such a transaction is "purely optional and voluntary," that the state is not trying to condemn the properties through eminent domain. If homeowners want to rebuild there now they can, since that portion of construction still is 10 to 15 years in the future.

For homeowners whose lives have been devastated by the flood, however, the state's offer would give them "one less uncertainty," Dietrick said.

Whether the state's appraisals of the homes would be based on preflood or post-flood conditions will depend on other variables, such as insurance, relocation costs and any Federal Emergency Management Agency grants homeowners receive, Dietrick said.

"The goal here is to make the homeowner whole, not to go in and try to get a (reduced price) property that's been devastated," Dietrick said. "The initial focus will be on appraisals based on preflood conditions, and we'll see if those numbers work out."

State Rep. Ralph Foley, R-Martinsville, said he was supportive of the transportation department acting "to make some determinations that would help the individual homeowner, help the city of Martinsville by

eliminating flood areas and help the state of Indiana by acquiring the right of way now, instead of who knows how many years from now." "

Work already has begun on the initial two-mile segment of I-69 in Gibson County, between Interstate 64 and Indiana 68 along the Indiana 57 corridor. That segment is part of I-69's Section 1 from Evansville to Oakland City, Ind., for which the federal government in December gave its approval.

Funding to build roughly half of the Interstate 69 extension, from Evansville to the Crane warfare center, was generated through the state's "Major Moves" transportation program advocated by Daniels.

Officials have said the remainder of I-69, from Crane through Martinsville to Indianapolis, would be funded more traditionally using federal gasoline tax revenue, unless some other funding source is identified.